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FIG. 1. TOMB-CHAMBER OF HOR-MEHET-BITI, AT SAKKARA

RECENT EGYPTIAN ACQUISITIONS

THE Museum has now placed on exhibition in Room 6, formerly devoted to American antiquities, the first consignment of Egyptian antiquities resulting from the work carried on in Egypt during the past year. The intention of the Trustees to provide for the development of the Egyptian collection along systematic and definite lines was announced a year ago¹ and the plan of work as then outlined provided both

for the increase of the collection through material resulting from organized work of excavation in Egypt and for the purchase of such other objects as would fill out and strengthen the collection wherever its representation of a particular phase or period of Egyptian art was inadequate.

The material now placed on exhibition marks the beginning of the development of the collection on this new basis. From the excavations which are being carried on by the Museum expedition at the Pyramids of Lisht, in pursuance of this plan, the Museum will ultimately receive, from

¹ See the Bulletin for November, 1906.

last season's work, the great red-granite altar of King Amenemhat I, several complete blocks of relief sculpture and a considerable number of architectural fragments from the pyramid-temple of that king,¹ as well as many smaller objects which were assigned to our Museum by the Egyptian government in the division of the year's results. These will not reach the Museum until the coming summer, but a selection of objects found in the tomb of Senbtes during the same excavations² are now placed on exhibition. With these are shown a series of photographs illustrating the conditions under which the objects were found and also showing the various stages in the progress of the excavations as a whole.

Of the material purchased during the year there are some two hundred objects so varied in character that a detailed description of them all is not possible within the scope of this article, but attention may be called here to some of the more important examples and to the classes and periods to which they belong.

Among these the place of importance should be given to the large basalt sar-

cophagus of Hor-mehet-biti, acquired from the Egyptian government through the

friendly interest of Professor Gaston Maspéro, Director-General of Antiquities in Egypt. The sarcophagus comes from a tomb in the pyramid-field of Sakkara, about 150 yards due east of the Step Pyramid. In figure 1, from a photograph by J. E. Quibell, Director of Government Excavations at Sakkara, the sarcophagus may be seen in its original position in the tomb, with its lid moved aside by those who anciently plundered the tomb. In an inscription of seventeen perpendicular lines covering the lid and a single

horizontal line encircling the body of the sarcophagus, Hor-mehet-biti is described as "the royal treasurer, the royal friend, the overseer of the palace, the overseer of the royal chamber, honored by Ptah-Seker." The sarcophagus dates from the Later Period (26th-30th dynasty, about 600-400 B. C.).

As the Egyptian collection stood, a year ago, it contained but a limited number of examples of sculpture, and emphasis has been laid on the strengthening of this side of the collection so far as possible. A series of sculptures, both in the round and in relief, has been secured which mater-

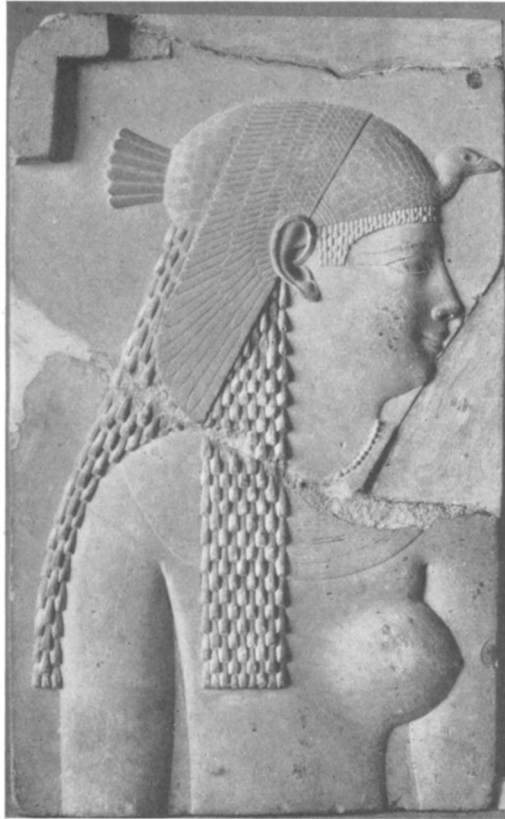


FIG. 2. SCULPTOR'S MODEL: HEAD OF A QUEEN OR A GODDESS, UNFINISHED

¹ Described in the Bulletin for July, 1907.

² Described in the Bulletin for October, 1907.

ially broadens the collection in its representation of this important side of Egyptian art. Grouped chronologically, they consist, for the Middle Empire, of a standing statuette of a male figure, in green basalt, and the upper part of a large quartzite statue—both characteristic of the simpler, but powerful, modelling of that period. To the New Empire belongs a series of four squatting statuettes of priests of Amon, in grey and black granite, the garments tightly drawn about the figure in each case and with no attempt to render detail; while in contrast to this, in a small seated



FIG. 3. SCULPTOR'S MODEL: FIGURE OF A QUEEN
OR GODDESS

group of a man and his wife, the drapery is worked out with all the elaborateness found in other types of sculpture of the same period. Of the New Empire, also, are a large head of a god (probably Amon), in grey granite, a smaller head of the same character in red granite, and the upper half of a red granite statue of the lioness-headed goddess Sekhmet. In illustration of the work of the Saïte or Later Period are shown a series of fourteen sculptors' models or trial-pieces, some of which are represented in figs. 2, 3 and 4. Although, in general, the sculpture of this period lacks the vitality and power of the work of the earlier epochs, yet the delicacy and subtlety of modelling and the minute rendering of detail, seen in some of the examples here figured, have never been excelled, perhaps, in the work of any period. Several of these models

have a particular interest in the fact that they are unfinished, and so illustrate the earlier steps by which the sculptor finally arrived at his finished product.

On other sides the collection has been rounded out by the acquisition of material of which there was inadequate or perhaps no representation. Of the Pre-dynastic Period are a number of examples of pottery of the more rarely occurring types—"decorated," "white-line" and "black-incised" ware—and also of this period are a number of flint knives and lance-heads,

showing the high degree of skill arrived at by the early Egyptians in the manufacture of such implements. The earliest beginnings of Egyptian sculpture are illustrated in four pre-dynastic figurines, of painted terra-cotta, while a pre-dynastic model of a boat, in terracotta, corresponds closely in type to those represented on the decorated vases of the same period. Of the Old Empire are a number of toilet vases of alabaster and diorite, chiefly of the 5th and 6th dynasties. Dating from the Middle Empire is a painted wooden group representing the enclosed fore-court of a house, in which a number of men and women are seen engaged in various occupations.

A series of eight silver vessels, with fragments of several others, some bearing the name of Rameses II and all of them dating from his reign, form an important contribution to the Museum's collection of

objects in the precious metals. They were found last winter near the site of the ancient Bubastis and are similar in type and design to a number of other vessels of the same date in the Cairo Museum. With these which have been added to our collection we are fortunately able to exhibit a gold vessel and fragments of two silver vessels, loaned by Mr. Theodore M. Davis, which were found at the same time.

From the Egypt Exploration Fund the Museum has received an important consignment of material found in the excavation of the 11th dynasty temple at Deir el-Bahari, on the west bank at Thebes, constructed by Neb-hepet-Ra Mentuhotep. The excavation of this temple has been carried on by the Fund during the past four years under the direction of Professor Édouard Naville, and has resulted in the clearance of the temple and in the recovery of a considerable amount of the

painted relief sculpture of the temple. Of this relief we are now able to place on exhibition one fine block bearing a portrait of King Mentuhotep and a number of fragments of other blocks, on all of which the color is remarkably preserved and the modelling of the relief is of the most delicate and beautiful quality. Also from this work at Deir el-Bahari is a large limestone sarcophagus, rectangular in form, of the Princess Henhenet, of the same period.

From the excavations conducted for the Egyptian Research Account the past season by Professor Flinders Petrie, at Gizeh (just south of the pyramid plateau) and at Rifeh (near Assiut), we have also received a number of objects, including a 12th dynasty seated statuette of Khnumu, in grey granite, and several model houses and offering-tables of terra-cotta.

A. M. L.



FIG. 4. SCULPTOR'S MODEL: HEAD OF A KING, UNFINISHED